



**U.S. AGENCY FOR  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT**

*The Administrator*

Dear Friend:

I am pleased to share with you this report on the U.S. response to Hurricane Mitch and Hurricane Georges.

These two hurricanes resulted in the worst natural disaster ever to strike the Western Hemisphere. They caused the deaths of more than 9,000 people, left millions homeless, and resulted in more than \$8.5 billion in damages to homes, hospitals, schools, roads, farms and businesses throughout the region. Responding immediately to the disasters, the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Defense, provided more than \$300 million in humanitarian relief aid to millions of people in the form of food, medicine, emergency shelter, and agricultural assistance.

The centerpiece of the U.S. response was the Central American and Caribbean Emergency Disaster Recovery Fund (CACEDRF), which contained a total of \$621 million in reconstruction assistance. Congress passed this legislation in May 1999, recognizing that full recovery of the region from the storms is clearly in the U.S. national interest.

This report reviews the relief and reconstruction efforts and details USAID's and U.S. government partner agencies' reconstruction efforts to date. Over the past decade, tremendous strides have been made toward settling conflicts, strengthening democracy, promoting human rights, opening economies, and alleviating poverty. The economic disruption and dislocation caused by the hurricanes threaten to undermine these achievements. Echoing the views of many Central Americans, we view the reconstruction process as more than just the chance to replace what was there before, but an opportunity to "build back better." In so doing, we can assist the people of these nations as they return to the path of sustainable development and economic prosperity.

Sincerely,

J. Brady Anderson

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